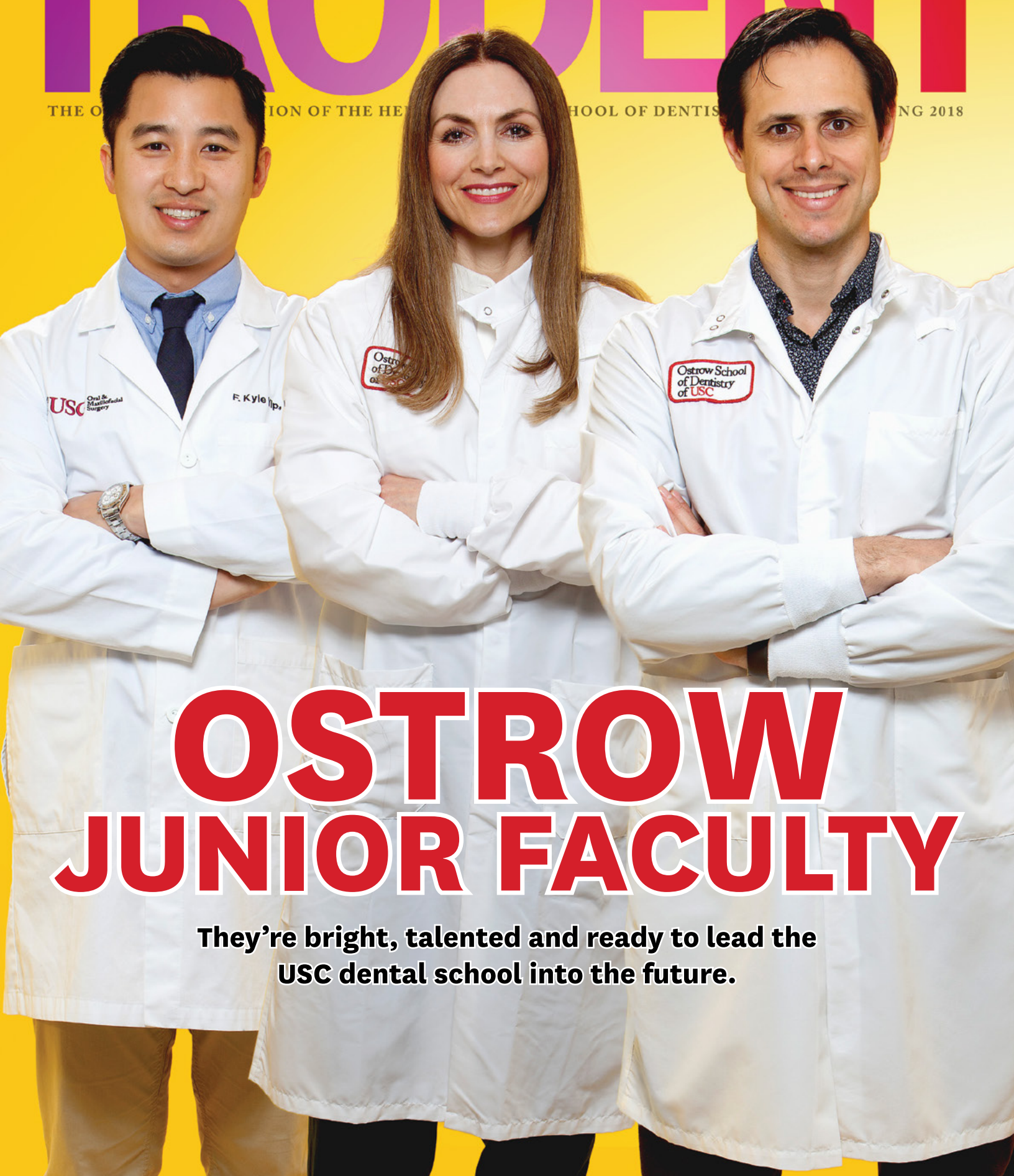


TRODENT

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The Street Beat

Earlier this year, Ostrow faculty and students took to the streets of Downtown Los Angeles to provide free dental screenings to nearly 100 homeless and low-income individuals during the [Skid Row Carnival of Love](#). The event, dubbed “a day of human kindness,” offered Skid Row residents free health care, hair cuts and feet washing as well as job interview training, identification cards and legal and housing services.

In this picture, Ivan Sabarre DDS '19 and Daisy Kwak DDS '20 screen Max, who complained of dental pain and had not seen a dentist in several years. “Dentistry has not only provided me the opportunity to improve someone’s health,” Sabarre says, “but has also given me the platform to spread positivity in a way that S others to know there is always someone who genuinely cares.”

PHOTO BY [GLENN MARZANO](#)

DEAN'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the Spring 2018 issue of TroDent!

In this issue, we celebrate the many contributions made by our bright, talented junior faculty members with our cover story, [“The Leaders of Tomorrow.”](#)

An educational institution is only as good as its junior faculty members. These are the individuals who fuel continued innovation. As new practitioners, they are not bound to fundamentalism or practicing in a way simply because that’s the way it’s always been done. They bring a brand-new perspective to a school, which, when coupled with the knowledge and experience provided by senior faculty members, can catalyze into real innovation and continuous reinvigoration — essential for the long-term success of a dental school.

This is why we made recruiting brilliant junior faculty members one of the key pillars of our \$115-million fundraising initiative, which is part of the Campaign for the University of Southern California. I’m thrilled to say we’ve been incredibly successful in recruiting and retaining some of the nation’s best — 15 of whom are featured in this issue.

Ask any of these junior faculty members what is essential for their success, and they will likely tell you it’s the senior faculty members who serve as trusted and experienced mentors. One such individual for many junior faculty members is Professor of Clinical Dentistry Eddie Sheh DDS ’91, PROS ’99, who was recently honored with a 2018 USC Excellence in Teaching Award. You can read more about the impact Sheh has had on junior faculty and students in [“Five Things.”](#) And just as we were sending this issue to press, we were notified that Professor Glenn Clark is being honored with a well-earned 2018 USC Mentoring Award for his continued support of Ostrow’s junior faculty members, postdoctoral scholars and residents. We stopped the presses to squeeze in a [news brief](#), with a [full story](#) available on Ostrow’s website. Congratulations, gentlemen, and thank you for your continued generosity and excellence.

This issue also features a feel-good feature story about a long-time patient who first came to the USC dental school at age 5 with a benign oral tumor ([“Twice Blessed”](#)), an inspiring story about a recent dental graduate whose experiences at Ostrow have given her the confidence to overcome a lifelong stutter ([“Tongue Tied”](#)) and an [“Inspired”](#) column by Adjunct Associate Professor of Clinical Dentistry Deborah Ruprecht DH ’88, DDS ’95, PERIO ’99, who shares her experiences providing dental treatment to underserved populations across the globe.

Enjoy the issue and as always fight on!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Avishai Sadan".

Avishai Sadan DMD, MBA
Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery Professor of Dentistry
Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

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THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW | **20-29**

They're bright, talented and ready to lead the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry into the future. Meet some of the junior faculty members making a real difference at Ostrow.

FEATURES

TWICE BLESSED | 18-19

In 1958, 5-year-old Lara Kerr made headlines after USC dentists diagnosed and removed a rare benign tumor from her mouth. Years later, Kerr, now 65, was treated by another USC dentist who corrected dental problems that had forced her to conceal her smile for years.

HEAL THE WORLD | 30-33

Every year, Ostrow's Dental Humanitarian Outreach Program travels the world, providing dental treatment to underserved populations. Find out how the international service trips foster in Ostrow students a lifelong desire to give back to their communities.

TONGUE TIED | 34-36

Roop Mayall DDS '18 has spoken with a stutter her whole life — something that could have kept her from pursuing a career that requires her to speak to patients. Not one to give up, the recent DDS graduate says her time at Ostrow has taught her not to let her insecurity define her. **Plus:** Communication skills to help students learn Spanish and face their fear of public speaking.

A CHANCE TO SMILE AGAIN | 37-39

Stephanie Saldana, 14, didn't expect to have her teeth by the age of 15. Born with amelogenesis imperfecta, the young woman felt self-conscious about her smile and couldn't afford treatment — until she came to Ostrow.

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QueensCare unveils massive mobile dental clinic

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DON CHIAPPETTI DDS '58 **ODD JOB COLUMNIST**

Don Chiappetti shares some of the "[Odd Jobs](#)" he held down during dental school, including working as a cadaver carrier, an oil field roustabout and a calligrapher.

What made you choose dentistry as your profession?

In my junior year of high school, my dad said, "What are you going to do for your career?" followed by, "Why don't you go spend a morning with our dentist Howard Wren [DDS '51]?" I did and — Wow!, it wasn't just fillings and cleanings.

What's your proudest accomplishment in life?

Being married for 63 years. Having our son [Don C. Chiappetti DDS '88] and grandson [Reed Chiappetti DDS '21] become USC dentists. Having four boys who love each other. Having a young dentist say, "Hey, I just saw an MOD onlay you did in the '60s ... still lookin' good!"

How do you plan to celebrate your class' 60th anniversary this year?

We usually meet at a place where we can *hear* the waitress and can see the menu, then we expound on exaggerated stories that are contradicted with snide disparagement.



SAVANNAH CUMMINS **PHOTOGRAPHER**

When we needed a great portrait for "[Twice Blessed](#)" of Ostrow grateful patient Lara Kerr, who lives in Utah, adventure photographer Savannah Cummins came to the rescue.

Published in: *National Geographic Adventure, Outside magazine, Climbing magazine*

How did you get started in photography?

I didn't find it till later in life when I was faced with a shoulder injury. I needed a hobby to fill my recovery time with, and I fell in love with it.

What's been your oddest job?

I found myself shooting photos in Antarctica in December. It was odd in the sense that human life doesn't really belong there, and surviving is a serious challenge!

What inspires you about your profession?

There are no rules in photography. You have the freedom to create and look at things any way you want!



DEBORAH RUPRECHT DH '88, DDS '95, PERIO '99 **INSPIRED COLUMNIST**

Adjunct faculty member Deborah Ruprecht shares her experiences providing dental treatment on international service trips in this issue's "[Inspired](#)" column.

Why is it important to give back?

Being a health care provider is a high calling and a privilege, so giving back should naturally be a part of our responsibility as professionals.

What was your oddest job during dental school?

It wasn't a job, but observing an autopsy. I was exploring the idea of specializing in forensics, but I quickly realized I could contribute more by working on patients who are still alive.

What did you learn about yourself by writing this column?

It gave me the opportunity to take inventory and gain a clearer perspective of a higher purpose for my work. Dentistry is such a unique profession that has the ability to sustain our interests, our values of improving the human condition and making us better people because of what we do.

DEAN

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ODULAIR

QueensCare unveils massive mobile dental clinic

With the addition of the new clinic, Ostrow students now provide treatment in the world's two largest mobile dental clinics.

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14

Nearly two years to the day after Ostrow unveiled what was at the time the world's largest mobile dental clinic, Ostrow's partner organization [QueensCare](#) has gone even bigger.

In early February, the nonprofit organization rolled out what is now believed to be the world's largest mobile dental clinic.

The nearly 1,200-square-foot clinic features six dental chairs, which can be moved to different positions within the clinic; a central sterilization unit with one-way processing to prevent contamination; and a lead-lined X-ray room.

"We are very fortunate to be able to provide comprehensive dental care to children in this state-of-the-art mobile clinic," said Camille Nishikawa DDS '10, director of the [USC/QueensCare Mobile Dental Program](#). "The capabilities

of this clinic allow us to reach a wider range of patients. It is truly one of a kind and has been specifically designed with the care of our young patients in mind."

Though not officially part of Ostrow's fleet of eight mobile dental clinics, the new QueensCare clinic will be staffed entirely by Ostrow faculty and students as part of a partnership that began nearly two decades ago to combat poor oral health care in children.

NUMBER ONE REASON FOR ABSENCE

Ostrow and QueensCare first joined forces in 2001 after learning that the number one reason Los Angeles children gave for missing school was tooth pain, according to the Los Angeles Unified School District. Of those who made it to school, 50,000 students were sent to the nurse complaining of toothaches every year.

Hoping to help combat the oral health care crisis, the USC dental school and the nonprofit organization developed the

USC/QueensCare Mobile Dental Program, which provides free comprehensive dental care to elementary school children across Los Angeles.

The clinic is staffed by Ostrow students (from their third and fourth years in the DDS program or their second year in the dental hygiene program) under the supervision of Ostrow faculty (five pediatric dentists and two general dentists). Last year, these Trojans provided treatment to more than 2,000 children. In total, they performed nearly 15,000 procedures, including dental restorations, pulpal-related treatments, stainless steel crowns, extractions, sealants, cleanings and exams.

ALL HAIL THE QUEEN

The new QueensCare clinic was unveiled at a ribbon-cutting ceremony that took place at Esperanza Elementary School on Feb. 1. More than 100 children and adults were given free oral hygiene kits and instruction, and 30 received dental screenings as part of the event.

Additionally, QueensCare held a naming contest, with classrooms competing to name the colossal clinic. The name chosen was "Whitening, the Queen."

QueensCare is a nonprofit organization that provides affordable health care to low-income and uninsured Los Angeles residents. It also gives charitable grants and scholarships to hospitals, health care agencies and individuals making a difference in low-income health care in L.A.

The USC/QueensCare Mobile Dental Program is just one of the initiatives of Ostrow's Community Oral Health Programs, which annually provides more than \$1 million in free dental care to underserved communities from Central California to the Mexican border.

In early 2016, Ostrow opened the doors to its own [massive mobile clinic](#), the crown jewel of its eight-vehicle fleet, thanks to a \$3-million grant from the Hutto-Patterson Charitable Foundation.

Outside of the military, Ostrow has the largest mobile dental clinic fleet in the nation.

NEWS BRIEFS

■ CLARK RECOGNIZED WITH USC MENTORING AWARD

Professor Glenn Clark received a [2018 USC Mentoring Award](#) in early May for his work with Ostrow residents and junior faculty members. “Your generosity in sharing your time and wisdom is an invaluable service to your mentees, your school and the university,” USC Provost Michael Quick said in the award letter. “I am grateful for your efforts to create a university in which all students and faculty can reach their full potential.” Since joining Ostrow’s faculty in 2003, Clark has mentored a number of residents, who have gone on to other institutions, as well as current junior faculty members, including Piedad Suarez OPOM ’06, MS ’18, Phuu Han OPOM ’09, DDS ’12 and Parish Sedghizadeh DDS ’01. Clark is the director of Ostrow’s orofacial pain advanced residency program and assistant dean of distance learning programs.

■ SUMMERHAYS HONORED WITH USC ALUMNI MERIT AWARD

Board of Councilors member Carol Gomez Summerhays DDS ’78 has been awarded a [2018 Alumni Merit Award](#) from the USC Alumni Association. The prestigious award is meant to recognize distinguished members of the Trojan family for their personal and professional achievements and dedication to USC. It has been awarded to such Trojan luminaries as Neil Armstrong MS ’70, Frank Gehry ’54, John Wayne and Louis Zamperini ’40. Summerhays has served in a number of professional dental organizations, including terms as president of both the [California Dental Association](#) and the [American Dental Association](#). She has been a Board of Councilors member since 2010 and has endowed two scholarships at Ostrow.

■ SHEH RECEIVES 2018 USC ASSOCIATES AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Professor of Clinical Dentistry Eddie Sheh DDS ’91, PROS ’99 received a USC Associates [Award for Excellence in Teaching](#). The award is one of the highest honors that USC faculty bestows on its members. It is the latest in a series of teaching awards for Sheh, who won two annual Excellence in Teaching Awards from the [Century Club Alumni Association](#), an Outstanding Faculty Award from the Associated Student Body and a Teacher of the Year Award from the [Pierre Fauchard Academy](#). He joined the Ostrow faculty in 1991 and teaches a year-long pre-clinical sequence in restorative sciences. He is the co-chair of the section of fixed prosthodontics and operative dentistry and the director of the Advanced Standing Program for International Dentists.

■ SNEAD ELECTED TO AIMBE COLLEGE OF FELLOWS

Professor Malcolm Snead has been elected to the [American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering College of Fellows](#), a group of 1,500 distinguished bioengineers that includes winners of the Nobel Prize and Presidential Medals of Science and Technology and Innovation. As an AIMBE Fellow, Snead will work toward advancing the nonprofit organization’s mission to advocate for biomedical engineering through public policy and by educating Congress on the importance of federal funding for basic research and medical innovation. Snead joined the Ostrow faculty in 1984 as a research assistant professor and has been the chair of the Division of Biomedical Sciences since 2012.

■ UNTERMAN EARNS ALPHA OMEGA ADVOCATE AWARD FOR WORK ADVISING USC CHAPTER

Earlier this year, Adjunct Associate Professor of Clinical Dentistry Leon Unterman DDS ’63 was honored with the inaugural Alpha Omega Advocate Award. The award is meant to recognize faculty advisors who provide continuous, positive support to their chapter’s students. Unterman was selected from among top faculty advisors around the world. He has been an Alpha Omega faculty advisor for nearly 10 years. Also recognized was Judy Naziri DDS ’19 with an Outstanding Chapter President Award. The Alpha Omega International Dental Fraternity is the oldest Jewish dental and medical organization in the world. There are more than 5,000 members living in more than 10 countries. Ostrow is home to the fraternity’s [Alpha Omega Tau](#) chapter, which has nearly 300 student members.

■ MAGNE RECEIVES JPD’S JUDSON C. HICKEY SCIENTIFIC WRITING AWARD

Associate Professor Pascal Magne has earned a 2018 Judson C. Hickey Scientific Writing Award from the *Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry*. In the award-winning article, titled “[Simplified treatment of severe dental erosion with ultrathin CAD/CAM composite occlusal veneers and anterior bilaminar veneers](#),” Magne showcases the way CAD/CAM technology coupled with adhesive dentistry can be used to fabricate missing parts of teeth. Instead of removing healthy tissue to place onlays, the dentist would be able to leave most of the tooth’s structure and strength intact. Magne joined Ostrow’s faculty in 2004. The esthetic dentistry expert teaches Ostrow’s first-year DDS students the fundamentals of biomimetic restorative dentistry. The *Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry* has a current impact factor of 2.095. Its editorial council is chaired by Baldwin Marchack DDS ’71.

FRONT DESK



SECRET LIVES, ODD JOBS, GAMES AND MORE!

SECRET LIVES

Daniel Schechter DDS '72

Astrophotographer

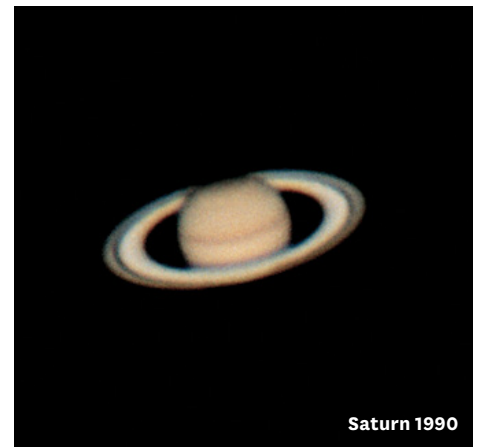
For the past four decades, the Ostrow faculty member has circled the globe chasing after the perfect shots of eclipses, comets and the stars.

continued on page 10 »

PHOTO BY LUIS SINCO
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Comet Hale-Bopp 1997



Saturn 1990



Solar Eclipse 2017

« continued from page 9

It was on a trip to a swim meet when Matt Schechter saw it.

“Hey Dad, guess what I just saw in the Atlanta airport,” Matt said during a call to his father, Clinical Assistant Professor Daniel Schechter DDS ’72.

“What did you see?” the elder Schechter asked.

“I was walking toward the baggage claim, and they have 15 to 20 really large astro photos on the wall,” Matt said. “When I get to the last one, I thought ‘That one looks just like my dad’s picture of [Comet] Hale-Bopp.’”

When Matt walked up to it, he saw the name.

“Dad, it was your photo!” he said, with excitement in his voice.

Turns out the picture (see above), which had won a NASA photo contest, was on just one of the many stops it’s made around the world as part of the exhibition, “[From the Earth to the Universe](#).”

The news took Schechter by surprise but also inspired pride. Like Hale-Bopp itself, one of his favorite photographs had traveled around the globe and been seen by millions of people.

Up all night

Schechter discovered his passion for photo-

graphing the cosmos after dental school when he returned to junior college to take some science courses — including geology and astronomy — that he had missed the first time around.

It wasn’t long before Schechter was out with his astronomy club, scanning the skies through his telescope and looking for great photographs.

“My wife knew not to schedule anything on New Moon weekends,” says Schechter, who would take advantage of the extra inky nights found in the mountains or deserts for a clearer view of the heavens above.

“Astrophotography put me in the middle of the wilderness in the middle of the night,” Schechter says. But more than simply appreciating the enormous canopy of stars overhead, Schechter enjoyed the challenge.

“As an endodontist, I get all the satisfaction of solving problems and doing cases that very few others could do,” says Schechter, who has worked in Ostrow’s graduate endodontics program for nearly 16 years. “It’s the same thing in astrophotography. I travel all over the world to get quality pictures that most other people weren’t getting.”

Chasing eclipses

Over the years, Schechter has become a solar eclipse enthusiast, circling the globe to photograph the awe-inspiring phenomenon. He’s journeyed to Hawaii, Bolivia, Aruba and Turkey and has witnessed six total eclipses of the sun (there would have been seven, but clouds obscured one).

During the most recent total solar eclipse visible in North America (Aug. 21, 2017), Schechter and his wife Pat traveled to Oregon to see the solar spectacle.

“I told my wife I wasn’t going to photograph this one because I wanted to just enjoy it,” says Schechter, who had waited 26 years for a total solar eclipse that he could drive to. “But then I thought, ‘Are you crazy? You can throw all your equipment in the back of the SUV and go.’” (See [his picture of that eclipse above](#).)

Though Schechter doesn’t get out to photograph the stars as much as he used to, he’s already looking ahead to the next eclipse visible in North America on April 8, 2024.

“Seeing an eclipse just reinforces the dynamics of the universe,” he says. “It reinforces the power of math that we know when and where a total eclipse will occur years into the future.”

—John Hobbs, MA ’14



Brush with Fame

How B.C.'s Thor became the whiskered face of Ostrow's mobile dentistry program

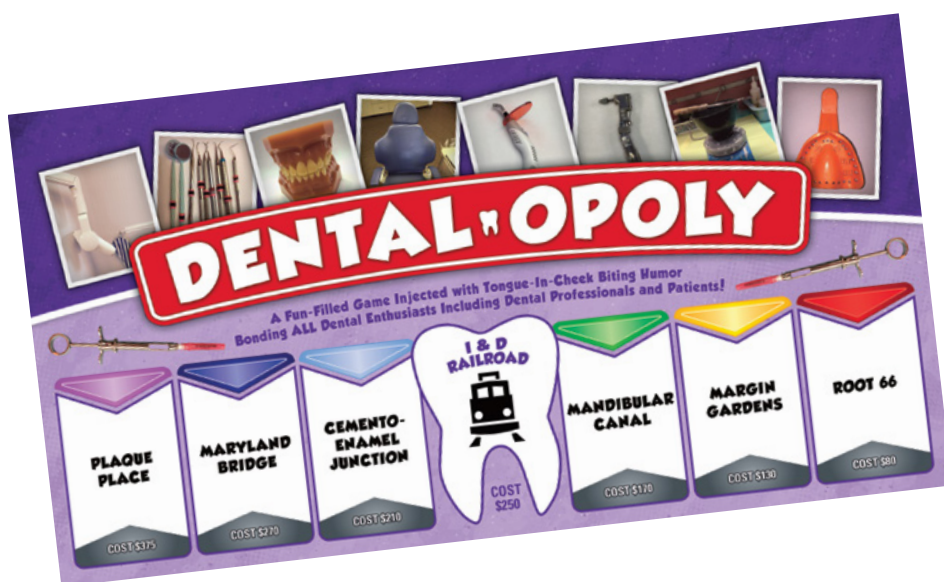
Long before Thor joined USC as a community dentistry ambassador, the unicycle-riding caveman was a regular in Johnny Hart's *B.C.*, a comic strip chronicling life in prehistoric times. In that world, he's an inventor (of the wheel and the comb) and a self-described ladies' man.

These days, Thor's cleaned up his act — at USC, at least (he still makes regular appearances in *B.C.*) — serving as the ambassador for Ostrow's mobile dentistry program. But how did he make the jump to community dentistry?

The answer comes from more than four decades ago when then-mobile clinic director Charlie Goldstein was reading *B.C.* Seeing the similarities between the ways the cavemen improvised Stone Age versions of modern amenities and the way the mobile clinics had to do much the same (cardboard dental chairs, paint compressor-powered handpieces), Goldstein was inspired to create "Thor, the Dental Ambassador."

He sent his concept to Hart and asked permission to use it as a lapel pin for mobile dental clinic volunteers. Happy to recognize "someone in this crazy world doing something for his fellow man," Hart refined Goldstein's drawing a bit and gave him unrestricted usage.

Though both men are no longer around, Thor, the Dental Ambassador shows no signs of slowing down, still representing the mobile dental program and the continued work it does in Goldstein's honor to give back to others in a still crazy world.



GAME ON!

Do not pass "Go." Do not collect \$200. Go directly to dentalopoly.com to buy your own edition of the dentist-ry-inspired send-up to the Parker Brothers (now Hasbro) classic. Instead of Park Place, there's "Plaque Place;" Marvin Gardens has been replaced with "Margin Gardens," and instead of going to jail, you're sent back to dental school after failing your dental board exams. Dentalopoly proceeds help support Operation Smile and S.O.M.E. ("So That Others Might Eat") Clinic — both of which provide free dental treatment to those in need.

Air of Gratitude

Ostrow faculty member thanks firefighters for saving his neighborhood from a wildfire by giving them xylitol nasal sprays.

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

On a morning in early December, West Los Angeles was awakened by screaming fire engines racing to Bel Air, Calif., to extinguish a wildfire that was raging near heavily-populated urban areas.

"It was scary," says Farshid Ariz, adjunct assistant professor of clinical dentistry. "Living in West L.A., surrounded by highways and streets, we didn't think we were at risk for wildfires."

Ariz's two-story family home of 27 years sat directly under the towering black plume of smoke suspended in the abnormally warm December sky. He and his family were placed on stand-by, suitcases packed, ready to flee at a moment's notice.

By the time the blaze was finally extinguished (more than a week later), the Skirball Fire had scorched more than 400 acres of land, burned down six structures,

damaged another 12 and temporarily shut down the 405 freeway.

Though Ariz's home was spared, the ordeal left him with a whole new appreciation of the dangerous work done by firefighters every day.

"This situation makes you realize how vulnerable you are to any unforeseen natural event, whether it be an earthquake, fire or mudslides," Ariz says. "These people are the first line of help. You just want to get up, shake their hands and say, 'Thank you for what you do.'"

Ariz had a chance to do just that. The periodontist, who also treats craniofacial, head and neck pain; TMJ disorder; and sleep apnea, partnered with a company that produces saline nasal sprays with xylitol to give the firefighters the gift of fresh air.

Saline nasal sprays help cleanse nasal and sinus passages of pollutants, irritants and contaminants. The xylitol additive ensures the passages are moisturized and protected.

Ariz often uses the product in his practice to open his patients' nasal passages

and prevent clinching and grinding while they sleep.

He helped deliver these nasal sprays to firefighters across Southern California, who spend much of their time in air full of smoke and ash.

"I talked to the captains, said 'I'm Dr. Ariz. I use these sprays for my patients. It will help you breathe better, and this is a token of my appreciation for what you do,'" Ariz says.

In total, 12 fire stations received 1,000 xylitol nasal sprays as a thank you for their services during the Skirball Fire.

Giving back is nothing new for Ariz, who has managed to juggle a solo practice in West L.A., a group practice in Northridge, Calif., and work as a part-time faculty member at Ostrow, educating the next generation of dental professionals. Last year, he celebrated his 25th anniversary with the school.

"I love teaching," Ariz says. "I learned my craft and my skills from somebody back in my day, and I am sharing with the new residents, and they will share with others. And it goes on and on."

A portrait of Don Chiappetti, an older man with white hair, wearing a light blue polo shirt. He is looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

ODD Jobs

What was the most peculiar way you made ends meet during dental school?

BY DON CHIAPPETTI DDS '58

During dental school, we were all broke. I had just married my wife of 64 years, Mary, who was a school teacher. She hadn't yet started her job, so we were doubly broke. All we would eat were 17-cent chicken pot pies. To this day, my wife won't touch them anymore, but I still love them.

Anyway, during my first semester, I saw a job posting looking for help carrying cadavers. At that time, you spent your first two years of dental school at the Flatiron Building on Exposition Boulevard. The cadavers needed to be carried from the ground floor to the third floor, where there was an anatomy lab with about 30 tables, so my classmate Hugh Brownson and I went for it.

It was a great job, and, for the most part, Hugh and I had a lot of fun — except for the time when Hugh lost his footing on the stairs and we both (plus our “passenger”) took a tumble, consequently traumatizing an unsuspecting group of dental hygienists at the foot of the stairs. Screams ensued, and the anatomy professor, Dr. Tibbey, rushed out to reprimand us. Needless to say, after that, we were more careful than ever.

My second “odd job” came the summer after my first year in dental school. Back then, we had our summers off. The father of another USC dentistry graduate, the late Dave Edmonson DDS '56, worked in the Ventura oil fields and got me a job as a roustabout. That job paid even better than carrying cadavers. I made \$2 an hour, which is about \$18.20 by today's standards. We could live on that!

The first thing I noticed was that many of my crew mates — all older guys — were missing fingers. I thought, “Oh jeez, that's the last thing I need to do is to cut off a finger or a thumb and not be able to practice dentistry.” So I tried to be extra careful, and the crew knew it and would watch out for me.

It was a really tough job. I would come home to Mary all dirty with oil, so I'd jump in the shower. Then when I ate dinner, my face would fall into my mashed potatoes because I was just dead tired.

The summer job in the oil field taught me a lot, chiefly how to get along with different types of people. When I left, I can remember those guys slapping me on the back and wishing me good luck. To this day, when driving through Ojai or Ventura, I have warm feelings because I learned so much during my days as a roustabout.

I got a little smarter after that and took a job as a calligrapher for the rest of dental school. At that time, the school kept a book of donors, so my job was to write in ornate script their names and the amounts they had donated.

After dental school, my days with odd jobs were over. I ran a successful practice in Scottsdale, Ariz., for 30 years, after which my son, another USC grad Donald L. Chiappetti DDS '88 took over. He just sold the practice, but it won't be long before my grandson Reed Chiappetti DDS '21 will be ready to carry on the Chiappetti name in dentistry. I can't tell you how satisfying it is to have my son and grandson follow in my footsteps as proud Trojan dentists. Now if I could just talk my granddaughter into it.

Did you have an odd job during dental school?

Email us at ostrow.communications@usc.edu for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue of TroDent.

MATCH GAME

OSTROW COUPLES EDITION

Dental school can be an intense experience, so it's no wonder that so many lifelong relationships (both romantic and non-romantic) tend to bud in the halls, labs and classrooms of the Norris Dental Science Center. Match the alumni couples with the ways in which they first met at Ostrow:

- 1 They were waiting in line for the dental school's one microwave (at the time) when she asked him if he wanted to cook their food together.
- 2 They became friends, going to barbecues together. He then asked her to study with him for the Western Regional Examining Board (WREB) exam and then asked her out afterward.
- 3 This couple met in the third-floor SIM lab when both were trying to use the same bench for classwork. Though initially annoyed with each other, the couple struck up a conversation and began dating shortly thereafter.
- 4 As a then second-year dental hygiene student, she was assisting a periodontics resident. He was there observing the periodontics resident as part of his residency interview.
- 5 These two made a bet as to who would get the highest score in their wax-carving class. The loser had to treat the winner to an expensive dinner — which served as this long-time couple's first date.



ANSWERS: 1E, 2D, 3B, 4C, 5A

FIVE THINGS

Eddie Sheh

DDS '91, PROS '99

This spring, Ostrow graduate and Professor of Clinical Dentistry Eddie Sheh was recognized with a [2018 USC Associates Award for Excellence in Teaching](#). For this issue, we asked Sheh's colleagues, students and one of his dental school professors to tell us five things about the award-winning instructor:

1 As a USC dental student, Sheh immediately stood apart from his classmates.

"Eddie was one of those guys who got the job done even if it meant staying past midnight in the lab. In the clinic, he was an example of hard working, very focused, always smiling and above all liked by his patients and respected by all his peers. I called him, 'the pursuit of excellence.'"

—Robert Mokbel,

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry

2 Sheh regularly receives high marks from students for his work in the classroom and on the clinic floor.

"Dr. Sheh's excellent teaching skills and courteous personality have helped me tremendously through my training in clinic. His guidance and encouragement were invaluable, and I have been so honored to be able to work under his supervision during my education."

—Askhan Milani DDS '18

3 Once an ASPID student himself, Sheh now serves as the director of the program for foreign-trained dentists who wish to earn an American doctor of dental surgery degree.

"He always strives for perfection along with discipline and determination, which is very difficult to attain. He goes that extra mile for us to make sure we learn right and enhance our skills."

—Meha Patel DDS '18 (ASPID)

4 Many junior faculty members consider Sheh a mentor.

"Eddie Sheh is a great mentor and an example of integrity and professionalism. He has made himself available to coach, guide and support me in taking the challenge of lecturing for the pre-clinical courses. I owe him a lot in my becoming a better instructor and a better person."

—Gabriela Anderson, Clinical Assistant Professor

5 This isn't Sheh's first teaching award, and it likely won't be his last.

"Dr. Sheh is highly respected by his peers. They trust his judgment and seek his advice on a myriad of pre-clinical and clinical issues. He has made substantial and sustained contributions to the educational mission of the school and university via his impeccable teaching skills, caring attitude and strong course management skills."

—Sillas Duarte, Chair of the Division of Restorative Sciences



THE KING IN WAITING

As emergency goalie for the L.A. Kings, Eric Chiccone '13, DDS '18 is always just a text message away from being called down to the ice.

All it takes is one text message.

With just a few thumb strokes, L.A. Kings fan Eric Chiccone could be transformed from spectator to suited-up goalie.

"I have not yet been called on to play," Chiccone says. "I definitely would be extremely nervous, but at the same time I would have absolutely nothing to lose. It would be pretty cool to make it on [ESPN's] SportsCenter."

Chiccone is one of four emergency goaltenders selected by the L.A. Kings to comply with a new National Hockey League mandate that every team have in the arena at least one additional goalie, ready to play should both regular goalies be injured.

(Recently, a [Chicago Blackhawks emergency goalie](#) played the last 14 minutes of a game, stopping seven shots and helping the team win against the Winnipeg Jets, 6 to 2.)

The L.A. Kings opened up the new unpaid position to local goaltenders, selecting 40 candidates to try out. From there, they chose 10 finalists before making their final four selections.

"I put in my application and, little did I know, it would all work out," Chiccone says.

The 27-year-old Yorba Linda-native began playing street hockey when he was 8 and had moved to a new neighborhood. "No one ever wanted to play goalie, and, as the new kid, I was just crazy enough to volunteer," says Chiccone, who went on to play ice hockey during high school and college.

As a high-school player, his team won state and regional championships, and he competed in the USA Hockey National Championship. During his undergraduate years at USC, he competed as a PAC-8 All-Star in the American Collegiate Hockey Association All-Star Showcase.

Even with all of his success, he knew a professional life on the ice wasn't for him.

"It was a very difficult decision, but I decided academics provided me a path I was better in control of," he says. "Little did I know, I would end up becoming a dentist — a profession which has a connection to hockey due to the fact that so many hockey players lose their teeth."

That connection doesn't end with a few knocked-out teeth. "Goalies must have razor-sharp focus, which is of course required to track a small rubber disk for 60 minutes of play," he says. "They must also have strong mental resilience and not shy away from responsibility" — all skills necessary for a successful career in dentistry.

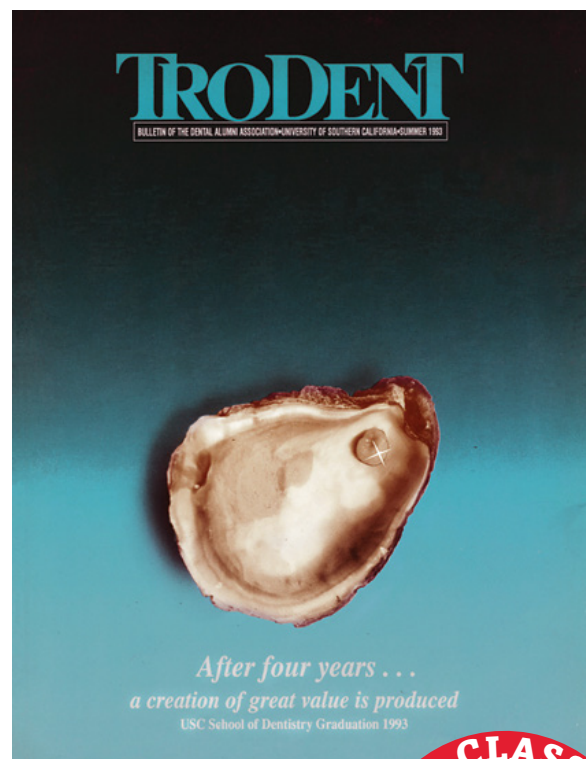
After commencement, Chiccone plans to move to New York to complete a six-year oral and maxillofacial surgery and medical doctor program, which he contends could still ultimately lead him to a rinkside career.

"One way I hope to incorporate hockey into my professional career is by serving as an oral surgeon for a hockey team," he says. "I think it would be a great way to combine my two passions."

He also plans to continue playing hockey during medical school to help provide some much-needed work-life balance.

"Hockey is a great outlet," he says. "I see it like a form of therapy. No matter how bad a day at the office is, while on the ice, nothing else matters."

—JOHN HOBBS MA '14



FLASHBACK 1993

The Summer 1993 *TroDent* issue celebrated the accomplishments of the Class of '93, likening their education to a grain of sand eventually transforming into a pearl. The issue also announced the new Louis and Erma Feldman Endowed Scholarship, a second-floor remodel — complete with a central sterilization area — and the purchase of a Tomax Ultrascan pluridirectional tomographic X-ray system, which promised to soon allow radiographs to be viewed on screen (sans film) and saved on disks. This year, the Class of '93 celebrates their 25th reunion.

For more information on this reunion or any other taking place this year, contact the Office of External Relations at (213) 740-0428 or ostrow.alumni@usc.edu.



Twice Blessed

Lifelong USC dentistry patient thanks Ostrow for instilling in its students a responsibility to give back.

BY MICHELLE MCCARTHY

Every time Lara Kerr hears USC mentioned, she thinks to herself, “Aw, my people!” This reaction is the result of being helped not just once, but twice by the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.

It all started when Kerr was 5 years old, riding in the back seat of her family’s station wagon. This was 1958, when seat belts weren’t commonplace. So when Kerr’s father was cut off by another driver and had to slam on the brakes, all of his children flew forward. That’s when Kerr hit her mouth on a metal brace. In a sense, Kerr’s parents were actually thankful for their daughter’s injury in the back seat that day. After all, if it weren’t for that painful incident, they would never have found the tumor growing in her mouth.

“This lump popped through my gum,” Kerr recalls. “They took me to the dentist, and he told us, ‘I hate to say this, but I learned in dental school about this rare kind of tumor, and I’m afraid that’s what I’m looking at.’” With seven children, Kerr’s parents — a teacher and a stay-at-home mom — didn’t have money for dental surgery, so they were referred to what was then called the USC School of Dentistry.

WOULD SHE LOSE HER JAW?

The tumor turned out to be an ameloblastoma, a benign yet aggressive growth that usually appears in the lower jaw near the molars. The rare condition attracted the attention of local media, and Kerr wound up with a [front-page story](#) about her experience at USC in the *Los Angeles Times*. “I remember holding my little doll and everybody lining up,” Kerr says of the day she was interviewed and had her photograph taken. “I thought, ‘What’s the big deal?’”

At such a young age, Kerr didn’t comprehend the severity of what she faced. Originally, her doctor, Marsh Robinson DDS ’42, MD ’46, thought he would have to remove her jawbone to extract the tumor, a procedure that would have left her disfigured.

“They told my parents before the surgery that they were going to remove my jawbone and use a rib bone to build a new one,” she says.

“They did another biopsy during the surgery and decided not to take it out. The details are a little sketchy to me because I was a little kid. I just remember that I woke up with a jaw.”

If you bring up Robinson’s name to Kerr now, she quickly becomes teary-eyed. Back then, she nicknamed him “Dr. Marshmallow” but now refers to the late faculty member and Ostrow Hall of Famer as her hero and someone who gave her a chance at a normal life. “If he had not taken so much extra care and instead just said, ‘Well, we’re going to take your jaw out,’ I would’ve gone through all of that reconstructive surgery. All of my teeth would be gone, and I would have been a little child with dentures.”

A HESITANT SMILE

While unaware of the possible outcome of her surgery, Kerr was very much in tune with her fear of needles, something Robinson did his best to comfort. “I was so scared going into the procedure,” she recalls. “I was lying on a little gurney and he came in, picked me up and carried me in his arms so I wouldn’t be so afraid. He didn’t have to show that kind of concern for me. He could’ve been completely clinical. So many times in those days, they’d say, ‘You’re going to be fine. Just hush.’ But he was so tender and kind to me.”

For 13 years, Kerr’s mother brought her back to the USC dental clinic to ensure the tumor hadn’t returned. To everyone’s relief, it did not, however, Kerr was left with what she describes as “a gaping hole” in her lower teeth, a source of embarrassment all of her life. Over the years, dentists said there wasn’t enough bone to attach an implant, but even if there was a solution, she simply didn’t have the money for what was considered cosmetic surgery. So instead, Kerr hid her smile.

“I wouldn’t open my lips when I smiled,” she says. “People would say they never noticed, but I was very aware of it and sad about it for many years.”

REPAYING KINDNESS

It was an embarrassment Kerr learned to endure. Time marched on, and she had children of her own. Decades later, a chance encounter would change everything. While attending church, she bumped into Duffy DeGraw DDS ’08, a close friend of her son’s who grew up next door to them in Paso Robles, Calif. DeGraw met Kerr’s son on the first day of kindergarten and was always at her house, playing Nintendo, jumping on the trampoline and building forts. “It got to the point where I would buy him little things for Christmas because I knew on Christmas morning he’d eventually show up,” Kerr recalls.

DeGraw was back in the area after graduating from Ostrow, having set up his own practice in nearby Los Osos, Calif. At their reunion, DeGraw walked up to Kerr, put his arm around her and said, “Lara, I owe you. I’d like you to come in; I’d like to work on your teeth.”

“She was kind of like a second mother to me, always taking care of me when I was over there, feeding me,” DeGraw says. “She had been a big influence on my life. When I was a child, she had done a lot for me — as much as she could. This was something easy for me to do to help her out.”

Kerr needed a root canal, restorations and a replacement for her missing tooth. DeGraw utilized his newly purchased CAD/CAM machine to create a cantilever bridge that would fill the space left by her childhood surgery. Now Kerr says her days of being hesitant to smile are behind her. “I’ve been so thrilled with the whole thing. I’ve tried to think of things to do for Duffy. I made him cookies, and I made his wife a nativity scene with handmade clothes.”

Because her two experiences with USC had such huge impacts on her life, Kerr was moved to write a thank-you letter in which she applauded the sense of community service USC instills in its students. She wrote: “USC blessed me twice. First, people who walked your halls removed my tumor and helped me heal. Then, years later, a young man who walked your halls stepped in to give me the gift of an unrestrained smile. For that, I express my gratitude.”



THE

LEAD



LEADERS OF TOMORROW

BY JOHN HOBBS MA '14, YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16 & JAMIE WETHERBE MA '04

Since the late 19th century, USC has been providing the dental profession with some of the its greatest minds. These dental giants have worked tirelessly to push dentistry forward into ever-exciting directions. Standing on their shoulders are today's junior faculty members, who are practicing in a world practically quaking with technological innovations, automation and industry disruption. Coming of age during this turbulent time has given these junior dental faculty members the ability to look at the profession with brand new eyes. In this issue, we meet 15 junior faculty members (one not pictured) who are unbound to the rules of the past, technologically savvy and ready to shake things up. From researchers working to “grow” teeth in a laboratory to practitioners treating complex dental cases with digital technology to educators looking to continually refine Ostrow’s curriculum, meet some of the leaders of tomorrow.

PHOTO BY JOHN SKALICKY



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

ANITA TOURAH DDS '08, PROS '12

The Gatekeeper

When the opportunity arose to join Ostrow's faculty, Anita Tourah was all in. "I really wanted to work in an environment that influences people's lives personally and professionally," the assistant professor of clinical dentistry says.

In addition to teaching prosthodontics to DDS students, Tourah became assistant dean of admissions last year, overseeing the never-ending cycle of attracting and recruiting the most talented prospective students to USC.

It's a job Tourah is well suited for — given she completed both her DDS degree and prosthodontics advanced training at Ostrow.

"I'm able to channel my own perspective as a former student and resident to my current role," Tourah says. "I have the opportunity to use our resources and select the best possible students to our programs."

Recently, Tourah upgraded Ostrow's admission process to include a "multiple mini interview." Already used in several medical, pharmacy and dental schools in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, the multiple mini interview format puts prospective students through a series of short, structured interviews with faculty members to measure non-cognitive attributes — such as maturity, ethical decision making and empathy — that are also essential to success as a health care provider.

The multiple mini interview — which takes place alongside the problem-based learning case scenario — is just one of many ways Tourah intends to innovate the way Ostrow's Office of Admission and Student Affairs works.

"Progress is impossible without change," Tourah says. "By continuously refining the admissions process, we aim not only to select the best students but also to make sure USC produces the very best clinicians and scholars." —**YP**

NAM CHO DDS '05, MD '08, OMFS '11

The Virtual Surgeon

3-D imaging and printing aren't just for designers. Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Nam Cho is incorporating this cutting-edge technology into oral and maxillofacial surgery.

"Before this was available, there was some degree of guessing as it related to the specifics of the patient's anatomy. Now we're able to very accurately plan and execute surgery," says Cho, who serves as director of the advanced oral and maxillofacial surgery program and teaches these innovative techniques to its residents.

Computer-planned surgery or "virtual surgery," allows providers to simulate a procedure on a computer and, using 3-D printing, craft surgical guides or plates customized to each patient, making surgeries more effective.

One area in which these types of procedures could be used is when orthodontics alone can't correct a condition — for instance on a patient with a severe underbite.

"So functionally the teeth aren't working well, and aesthetically they don't have the smile they would like," Cho says. "With the use of braces, virtual-surgery planning and ultimately surgery, the patient can have teeth that function and look better."

Cho sees these types of applications as just the tip of the virtual-surgery iceberg, with this technology soon becoming the standard of care.

"In 2011, this wasn't a part of my training; we're just getting to know how powerful this new technology can be," he says. "Soon we'll start applying these custom treatment plans to patients across all disciplines," he says. —**JW**



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

THANH TON DDS '99, MPH '17

The Foster-Child Advocate

As the clinical director of the Pediatric Dental Clinic (PDC) at the LAC+USC Medical Center, Thanh Ton is a master at building things from scratch.

"Our clinic is new, so there's no manual," Ton says of PDC, which she [helped open](#) in 2016. "But that challenge is what I love most about my job."

The clinic — a collaboration between Ostrow, the [Violence Intervention Program](#) and L.A. County — treats foster children in need of dental care, providing everything from check-ups and cleanings to treatment for more complex cases.

"We see a lot of decay in children who are older," she says. "And we do a lot of comprehensive rehabilitations."

To treat patients that require general anesthesia, Ton secured a First 5 grant, giving PDC privileges in the [LAC+USC Medical Center's](#) operating room.

Additionally, the assistant professor of clinical dentistry has forged a collaboration with Ostrow's pediatric dentistry postgraduate education program, allowing first-year residents to rotate through the clinic. She also helped create a USC dental externship that allows fourth-year dental students interested in pediatric dentistry or treating children in a hospital setting to apply for a seven-day PDC rotation.

Thanks to participation from the dental school, the three operator-clinic treated 1,600 patients during a seven-month period.

"Right now, we're very small," Ton says. "In the future, I want us to be sustainable, to see more patients and expand. That's my goal and hope."

—JW

NEEMA BAKHSHALIAN PERIO '14

The Peri-Implantitis Pioneer

It was a particularly talented dental school professor at Florida State University that first inspired Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Neema Bakhshalian to aspire to teach.

"I really liked his passion and how much time and effort he put into making sure we walked away better practitioners," Bakhshalian says. "I thought that's what I want to do."

After completing dental school, Bakhshalian earned a PhD in bone biology before pursuing his studies at USC in periodontics.

In 2014, he started at Ostrow as a research associate, becoming a faculty member in July 2017.

While at Ostrow, Bakhshalian has dedicated himself to improving the treatment of peri-implantitis, a bacterial infection at the site of a dental implant that can lead to bone loss.

His group has developed a novel treatment protocol for severe peri-implantitis that allows dental practitioners to remove biofilm, re-treat the implant's surface and repair any bone defects to prevent future infection.

The team has also created an implant small enough (1.2 millimeters wide) to place in a rat's mouth, so that researchers can further refine peri-implantitis treatment using an animal model. The micro implant is now used in several schools across the nation (including UCLA) and in Japan.

Outside of the lab, Bakhshalian teaches treatment planning seminars, supervises students in the clinic and helps periodontics residents perfect their master's theses.

But most rewarding for Bakhshalian is the impact he has on his students. Just as he was first inspired to teach by a teacher, he says, "There are some students who tell me they really want to consider teaching because they like how I do what I do. It really makes me feel good." —JH

PHOTO BY [TAN KHUU DDS '18](#)



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

JIAN XU The Cellular Crusader

Assistant Professor Jian Xu is making a big impact on the dental world by studying our cell's smallest parts.

Her work on chromatin modification examines how enzymes methylate proteins — basically, how cells turn signals on and off, like a light switch, and how this impacts chronic diseases.

Enzymes use these core proteins for several reasons, including receiving and sending information. For example, if there's chronic inflammation in a tooth — whether caused by a simple bacterial infection or something more sinister like HIV — the rest of the body needs to know, so it can fight off disease.

"To do this, the cell has to actively make proteins to produce this information and communicate to adjacent cells," Xu explains.

By focusing on a specific enzyme that helps regulate chronic inflammation, Xu and her team have developed a topical cream that removes this enzyme altogether, actually inducing mouth inflammation.

Knowing that removing the enzyme causes inflammation, Xu is investigating whether adding a synthetic protein to a patient's mouth could trigger the body's immune reaction and perhaps eventually cure periodontitis.

"Periodontitis is still treated with antibiotics," she says. "But if we can create a cream with a local effect, it won't have a systemic impact."

Xu hopes this same concept can eventually be applied to other chronic diseases.

"Inflammation is a huge problem for diabetics, and there aren't efficient treatments," she says. "By manipulating the pathway to have faster resolution in the oral cavity, we could help patients resolve inflammation in the mouth or other areas. That's the long-term goal." —JW

NEIMAR SARTORI The Master Craftsman

Neimar Sartori always knew he wanted more than a clinical career.

"I was always curious about why something was a certain way and why some people use certain techniques over others," the assistant professor of clinical dentistry says.

Sartori realized his inquisitive nature made a career in academia an ideal aspiration for him.

Before joining Ostrow's faculty in 2013, the Brazil native earned his DDS, master's and PhD degrees at the [Federal University of Santa Catarina](#) in Brazil.

He now serves as assistant director of Ostrow's advanced operative and adhesive dentistry program.

In addition to teaching restorative dentistry to both students and residents, Sartori has made a name for himself using digital technology to treat some of Ostrow's most complex cases — many times restoring a patient's entire mouth.

He recently treated a young patient with amelogenesis imperfecta who needed scaled-down veneers to fit her small mouth, requiring precision that can only be provided by a computer.

"I try to design everything on the computer instead of sending it to a lab," says Sartori, who uses CAD/CAM together with adhesive dentistry to restore not only the aesthetics of a beautiful smile but also long-lasting function.

When working with students to treat patients, Sartori hopes to lead by example — especially when it comes to patient care.

"I want to influence them to be critical thinkers but also to have the knowledge, passion and sensitivity to understand their patients. Understand what they want, and always do the right thing," he says. —YP

PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)





PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

ALENA KNEZEVIC

The Restoration Specialist

An expert in the field of dental composite photopolymerization, Clinical Assistant Professor Alena Knezevic brings a worldly perspective to her research and teaching techniques.

While working in Croatia, Knezevic was among the first to develop a specific method called digital holographic interferometry for measuring how composite resin materials shrink during polymerization. (Composite shrinkage can “pull” on the tooth wall, possibly leading to fractures.)

“That method is very common in physics, but it was never used for dental purposes,” says Knezevic, whose research credits also include a variety of curing light and lasers in dental restorations to prevent such shrinkage.

In Europe, providers are focused more on composite resin and bonded restoration, she explains.

“But here, many decisions are made by what health insurance covers or how much a patient can pay,” she says. “When I came [to the United States], everything was about the crown, and there wasn’t too much attention on composite materials.”

During her six years at Ostrow, Knezevic has focused her research on various composite and restoration techniques and teaching students how to apply this clinical knowledge.

“If a composite is done properly, it can be really long-lasting,” she says. “Placement of a composite takes more time and effort, but you’re saving more tooth structure.”

Knezevic wants students to have the training to make every effort to save as much healthy tooth structure as possible — even if it takes more time.

“Give the patient the chance to keep the real tooth,” she says. “I tell my students: Always imagine you’re treating someone you love — so what you would do for them, do for your patient.” —**JW**

JIANG “JOHN” ZHONG MS ’02, PHD ’03

The Cell Whisperer

If ever there comes a time when scientists “grow” transplant organs using a patient’s own stem cells, it could be a result of some of the research currently being conducted by Jiang “John” Zhong.

The assistant professor who joined Ostrow in 2014 is determined to better understand the way genes regulate each other to create specific proteins — knowledge that could ultimately give scientists the ability to manipulate stem cells into developing into specific types of cells.

While most researchers up to this point have studied cells by the millions, Zhong is doing it one cell at a time, giving him a much clearer view of the ways genes communicate with each other.

Not only would Zhong’s research change the ways organs are transplanted — decreasing the likelihood of immune rejection — it could also impact cancer treatment.

Instead of using traditional chemical and radiation treatments that often kill both cancer and healthy cells indiscriminately, health care practitioners could opt for methods that slow or stop cancer growth on the cellular level. Such a discovery would improve patients’ quality of life and mean fewer nasty side effects associated with traditional cancer treatments.

“I really hope to encourage my students to explore the unknowns and apply new knowledge to address biomedical challenges in their daily lives,” says Zhong, who leads DDS students in problem-based learning sessions and mentors Ostrow post-docs in their own research projects. —**JH**

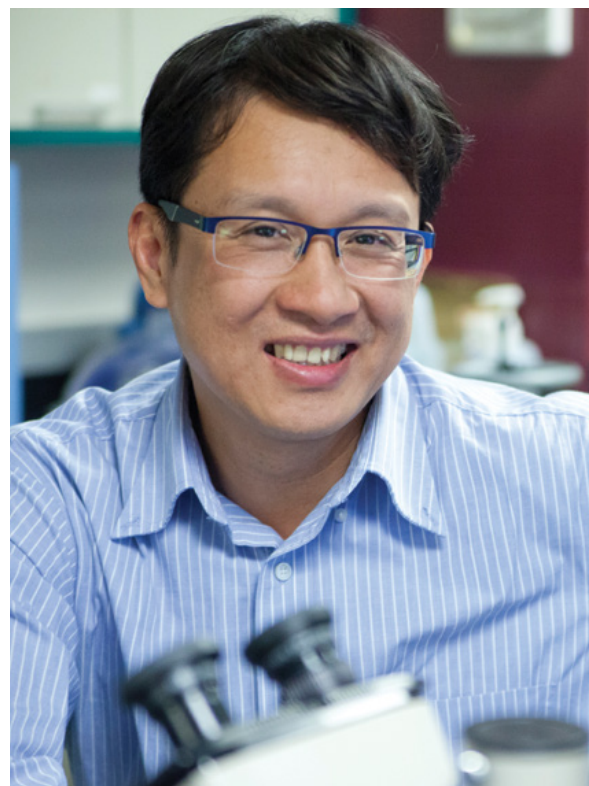


PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

GELAREH RONAGHI PROS '14

The Confidence Builder

Gelareh Ronaghi took a career in academia to give back to future dental professionals the way her instructors had once done for her.

"I believe teaching is a way of making the world a better place, and I wanted to be a part of that," she says.

Ronaghi began teaching at Ostrow in 2014, shortly after completing her prosthodontics postgraduate education program.

Though she mainly instructs prosthodontics residents (supervising full-mouth rehabilitations and overseeing seminars), Ronaghi also teaches DDS students in both clinical and pre-clinical settings.

It was in teaching restorative dentistry to DDS students in both settings that the assistant professor of clinical dentistry saw a way to improve the curriculum to better prepare them for the clinic floor.

"I wanted to make sure they had the same confidence in the clinical setting with regards to restorative dentistry as they have in the pre-clinical setting," Ronaghi says.

To do that, Ronaghi established a new course called Integrated Restorative Dentistry, which builds upon the didactic teaching from previous modules but adds simulated patient treatments for experiential learning. The inaugural cohort of first-year DDS students took the new course this year.

"This course teaches them how to think like clinicians and how to address restorative dentistry cases," she says. "Anything and everything on restorative dentistry is covered even from previous modules."

Ronaghi believes this course will give the students the courage necessary on the clinic floor to approach dental complications and propose solutions.

"I hope the students walk away from their coursework here at Ostrow with the confidence to believe in themselves and to become leaders and educators in their own communities." —YP

JIN-HO PHARK

The Drill-Less Dreamer

Jin-Ho Phark dreams of a day when dentists use their drills a lot less often.

The assistant professor of clinical dentistry aims to change the way future generations of dental professionals think of caries from a condition to be repaired after a cavity has formed to something to be managed during its earliest stages.

"As dentists, we can see caries on the X-rays early," he says. "We need to change our focus to prevent these lesions from progressing."

Potential early interventions include techniques like resin infiltration and silver diamine fluoride application as well as patient hygiene and diet changes using the Caries Management by Risk Assessment protocol.

Phark's philosophy on treating caries is very much in line with the profession's push toward minimally invasive dentistry.

"Each little bit of tooth that you drill away is not going to grow back, and you're going to weaken the tooth significantly," he says. "So what we're trying to do above all else is preserve the tooth structure."

Phark is already teaching these early intervention techniques in lectures to DDS students and residents in the advanced operative and adhesive dentistry program and hopes to find ways to have it incorporated into the school's curriculum.

This willingness to continually evaluate and innovate the profession is an example of what he hopes to impart in his students.

"I usually encourage my students to ask 'Why?' — why things are being done that way and how can they be done better to help us improve the treatment, the flow and the quality of our work," he says. —JH

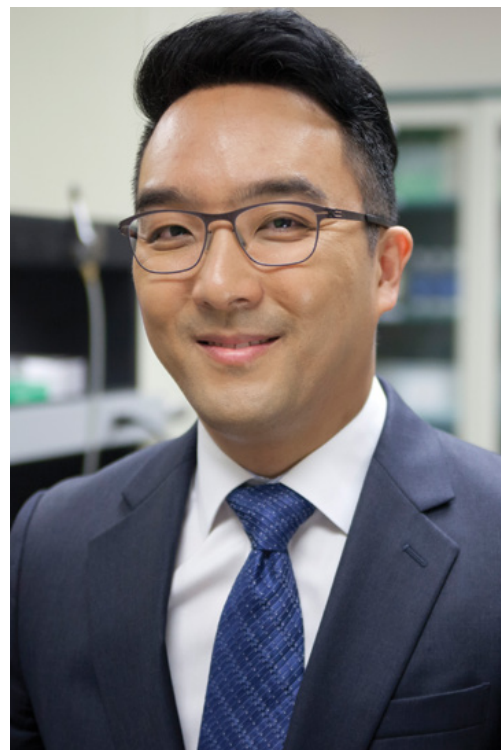


PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)



PHOTO BY JOHN SKALICKY

CHERYL PARK '07, DDS '13, PROS '16 The ASPID-DDS Curriculum Uniter

Cheryl Park came to Ostrow to become a prosthodontist. By the time she graduated, she had a slightly different vision for her future.

Citing a handful of influential faculty members (Winston Chee PROS '86; George Cho DDS '87, PROS '90; and Tae Kim PROS '01, among others), Park sought to walk in the shoes of the figures that had loomed large over her own dental education by becoming an educator.

"It was an exciting time," she says. "Dr. Sillas Duarte had changed the curriculum to incorporate newer CAD/CAM technology, and I saw how forward-thinking our curriculum was in comparison to other schools."

Continuing that forward-thinking tradition, the assistant professor of clinical dentistry, who teaches pre-clinical modules to both DDS and ASPID students, spearheaded an initiative last year to integrate the indirect restorative curriculum for both groups to ensure they had the same training before they entered the clinic together.

Not only does the integration help supervising faculty in the clinic — they now know every student, DDS or ASPID, is armed with the exact same knowledge — it also helps the students (particularly the ASPID students) whose work is now assessed by several faculty members.

Park also helped streamline the anterior and posterior fixed prosthodontics module from two trimesters into one and introduced video clips of dental procedures during lectures to better teach today's tech-savvy millennial generation.

It's this type of out-of-the-box thinking that first got Park interested in teaching. She hopes her students will be just as inspired.

"In the end, I hope to be as influential to my students as my Ostrow mentors were for me and for them to find their paths at what is a fulfilling career for them," she says. —YP

KYLE YIP MD '13, OMFS '16 The Back-to-Basics Oral Surgeon

Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Kyle Yip wants Ostrow's oral and maxillofacial surgery (OMFS) residents to graduate feeling like their educations are incomplete.

"I want to prepare them for a career of lifelong learning," Yip clarifies. "Ostrow trains really great clinicians, but I think the best way to go about your career is to feel like you should always be learning."

It was this focus on lifelong learning that inspired Yip to join Ostrow's faculty after completing his studies in 2016.

"I really like working with upcoming residents, and it helps to educate me in my own career, too," he says.

As a recent OMFS resident, Yip had a unique vantage point to identify areas of potential growth for the specialty.

First up: Yip sought to bolster the program's didactic base — a departure for a field that has traditionally focused on clinical experiences.

"I wanted to create a curriculum that we could review, year after year, and build upon so that the residents could have a better academic foundation for their clinical experiences," Yip says.

He also started encouraging residents to participate in research, publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals and make presentations at national oral and maxillofacial surgery professional meetings to increase Ostrow's visibility on the specialty's national stage.

Yip says this sharper focus on research will help Ostrow's OMFS graduates lead the way in a field that is ever-changing.

"We have long careers ahead of us," he explains. "We need to keep up with everything in order to do the best we can for our patients." —JH



PHOTO BY JOHN SKALICKY



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

LISA HOU '08, DDS '12, MS '17 The Geriatric Care Advocate

"I love geriatric dentistry, and there really is a growing need for this [service]," Lisa Hou says.

As the director of [USC's Mobile Dental Clinic at Hollenbeck Palms](#), a nonprofit retirement community, Hou provides specialized care for elderly patients and prepares the next generation of dental professionals to treat this growing, and often underserved, population.

Last year, Hou helped expand the clinic's space and services by launching a mobile dental clinic, complete with three chairs and a lift to accommodate wheelchairs.

"[The mobile clinic] allows us to increase the number of procedures we are able to do and show the students," Hou says. "So they are exposed to a variety of geriatric patients, and the types of patients they will see in private practice."

As part of USC's curriculum, students rotate through the clinic, providing certain treatments bedside, as well as everything from check-ups to multiple restorations and crown preps inside the mobile clinic.

Students also receive unique hands-on training while working with a range of complex conditions and medications.

"You can't just focus on the dentistry; there's a whole body attached to that mouth," she says. "It's about knowing your patient and how to quickly review an entire medical chart and grab the information you need."

The students' time in the clinic is a learning experience in more ways than one. "They see how difficult it can be for older adults to access care and how having the mobile clinic right there makes such a difference," she says. —JW

NISSIM BENBASSAT '03, PROS '12 The Consummate Educator

In a sense, Nissim Benbassat joined the "family business" the day he became an Ostrow faculty member.

His father, [Maxim Nissim Benbassat](#), has been a USC faculty member for more than 20 years, teaching anesthesiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

It was in part by seeing the gratifying work his father did in health care that the younger Benbassat, an assistant professor of clinical dentistry, became interested in science.

"I volunteered as an undergraduate in the maxillofacial surgery department at LAC+USC Medical Center," says Benbassat, who earned a bachelor's degree in biomedical sciences from USC. "I was just fascinated with the prosthetic treatments the patients received."

After finishing his undergraduate studies in 2003, Benbassat left Los Angeles to complete his DDS at New York University. In 2008, he returned to the Golden State to pursue his postgraduate studies in prosthodontics at Ostrow.

Since joining the faculty in 2013, Benbassat has served in various leadership positions within the Dental Faculty Assembly, Ostrow faculty's representative body. Most notably, Benbassat served as its president from 2016 to 2017, representing Ostrow within USC's Academic Senate.

But it's his work with Ostrow students — assigning patients and completing treatment plans while increasing on-time graduation rates — that makes him the proudest.

"My hope is that students come out of USC with the conviction that doing the right thing for their patients and serving the community in a compassionate ethical manner is the only way to be a successful practitioner." —JH

PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)



PHOTO BY [JOHN SKALICKY](#)

JENNY SON DDS '10, PROS '14

The CAD/CAM Champion

Jenny Son always thought about teaching, but it was during one course in particular — anterior and posterior fixed prosthodontics — that she decided to make it a career goal.

“I was impressed by the knowledge and skills of the faculty, and the transference of that knowledge was so gratifying,” Son says.

Son has been a faculty member since 2014. As assistant professor of clinical dentistry, she teaches both Ostrow students and residents alike.

“The education I received at Ostrow and the training in prosthodontics enables me to teach in all levels and areas of dentistry, and I really enjoy the variation,” she says.

With her academic career in full bloom, Son has set a new goal: She is working with George Cho DDS '87, PROS '90 to incorporate computer technology into implant dentistry.

“Our goal is to have all our students place implants by utilizing the computer-guided implant surgery system,” Son says.

Using a patient's CT scan, which provides 3-D information on

the jaw bone, overlapped with a 3-D image of the patient's mouth, students can predictably plan for the ideal placement of a dental implant.

“The benefit is that it enables students to visualize the location and position of implants as well as bone and other anatomical structures before performing the actual surgery,” Son says.

Perhaps the greatest advantage is that with computer assistance, procedures are extremely precise.

Ostrow has set a goal to have its DDS students place at least one implant before graduating.

Son hopes the student's experience at Ostrow inspires them to make the profession better.

“I want our students to become adept clinicians and lifelong learners who invest their time and efforts to improving the dental care of patients, community health and education,” she says.

“I hope they use their careers to enhance the field of dentistry — not only in terms of providing treatment, but also in advancing techniques and technologies.” —YP

A young boy with dark hair and a light complexion is reclined in a grey dental chair, looking off to the side. In the background, several people in blue medical scrubs and masks are visible, suggesting a clinical or outreach setting. The overall scene is brightly lit.

HEAL THE WORLD

Every year, Ostrow's Dental Humanitarian Outreach Program travels around the world, providing dental treatment and oral health education to underserved populations.

BY ANDREA BENNETT

[continued on page 32 »](#)



Levi Powell DDS '21, with José
before an extraction

PHOTO BY SAMAREH NIKOOKAR DDS '21

Kobie Gordon DDS '18 praises his young patient for staying still during his X-rays.



PHOTO BY JAKE TAZIK DDS '15

continued from page 31 »

For many students, packing up after fall semester finals means getting ready for family meals and winter vacation. For some Ostrow students, it means boxing up clinical supplies for an international mission to spread smiles in developing countries.

Late last year, approximately 50 dental students and 16 faculty members traveled to Masaya, Nicaragua, and set up at the Las Conchitas Elementary School to provide oral health care to pediatric patients as part of the [USC Dental Humanitarian Outreach Program](#). Led by students, with the active participation of faculty and alumni, the program provides periodontal treatment, operative dentistry and oral surgery to those who need it most.

The all-volunteer mission group includes students like Levi Powell DDS '21 (*pictured*

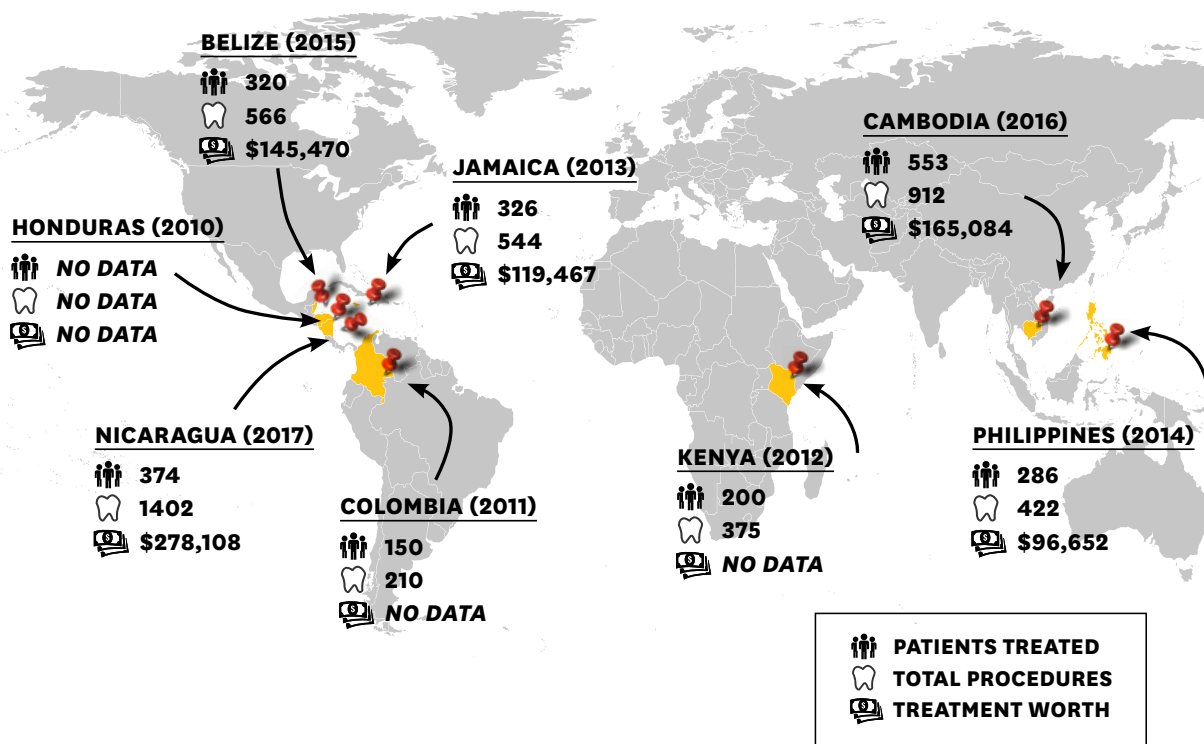
on pgs. 30-31) whose passion for community service began as a USC undergraduate. He was active in fundraising for AIDS awareness and in student government, and served as adviser on Black History Month banners that were installed on the University Park Campus in February. The Nicaragua mission is Powell's second humanitarian trip with the dentistry program, having also traveled to Guatemala.

"I've always been raised with the idea that giving back to the community is really important," Powell says. "My parents instilled that value in me and all my siblings. And this mission was really working every aspect from the ground up — getting donated supplies, packing, carrying them to the site. I loved every minute and plan to go on missions every year to offer dental services with the school."

The annual program has been in operation

since 2010, when a group of 10 dental students went on a self-financed humanitarian mission to Honduras. Over the eight years since its founding, the program has reprised a week-long mission each winter break and has served communities in Colombia, Kenya, Jamaica, the Philippines, Belize and Cambodia, providing care to more than 2,200 patients. Supplies are donated from generous alumni and supporters, and each student and faculty participant covers the cost of her or his own travel and housing.

Just as one mission comes to a close, Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Sunny Fereshteh DDS '09 will start meeting with students to begin planning the next one, resulting in a cycle of service — and smiles — that runs year-round.



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING

Travel isn't cheap. Taking part in international service trips can drain a student's wallet, since they often must pay their own travel expenses. To ensure students receive an exceptional education both inside and outside the classroom, the [Century Club Alumni Association](#) has created the USC Century Club Alumni Association Endowed Student Opportunity Fund. This fund pool will help students pay for international service trips like those embarked upon by the DHOP as well as professional meetings around the world. You can help support the Student Opportunity Fund by visiting dentistry.usc.edu/student_opp.

OSTROW AROUND THE WORLD

You might already know that Ostrow provides more than \$1 million worth of treatment every year in our own backyard. But did you know that USC dentistry's global footprint is much larger, with the Dental Humanitarian Outreach Program providing treatment all around the world? Above are all the service trips the group has taken since it began, including the number of patients, total procedures and how much that treatment would have cost in the United States.

"I loved every minute and plan to go on missions every year to offer dental services with the school."

—Levi Powell DDS '21



TONGUE *Tied*

PHOTO BY [NATE JENSEN](#)

Though Roop Mayall DDS '18 has spoken with a stutter her entire life, she didn't let it stop her from pursuing a career in dentistry.

BY YASMINE PEZESHKPOUR MCM '16

Standing at a busy restaurant counter during the lunch rush, Roop Mayall approaches the cashier to place her order.

"Name for the order, please?" he asks.

She opens her mouth to say her name, but she can't make a sound. She begins to feel the heat of anxiety build inside of her.

The cashier repeats himself, "What's your name, Miss?" he asks.

She tries again to say her name but is overwhelmed and entangled in her own words.

After what feels like an eternity and with a sea of people waiting behind her to order, she is finally able to produce the word, "Roop."

ONE OF THREE MILLION

Situations like these are not at all uncommon for people who struggle with speech disorders.

Three million Americans suffer from a stutter, according to the [National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders](#). Fourth-year Ostrow DDS student Roop Mayall is one of them.

"For as long as I can remember, I have had a stammer," she says. "Anything from public speaking to simple interactions with people to saying my name has always given me extreme anxiety."

Growing up in Davis, Calif., Mayall always knew she sounded different than other kids, but fortunately she had a supportive group of friends and family, so it never bothered her.

"As a child, I never let my stutter get to me personally," she says. "I first felt the negative impact of my stutter in college. I felt an enormous pressure to hide my stutter. That's when I started avoiding my friends and family."

As Mayall became older, she started to realize how her speech inadvertently caused others to judge her in both personal and professional settings.

"It was one of those unfair truths," Mayall says. "Almost every speaking situation was clouded with negative emotions, from briefly introducing myself to participating in school presentations."

Stuttering became a great source of anxiety, and her avoidance tactics were starting to fall short.

"It was simply exhausting," she explains. "It took more energy to avoid situations than to actually deal with my stutter."

JUST BREATHE

From a young age, Mayall remembers going to various speech pathologists but says that, while they all had the best intentions, their interventions never worked for her.

With the support of her family, Mayall enrolled in the [McGuire Programme](#) in high school.

The McGuire Programme is a worldwide community that helps participants overcome stuttering using breathing and other techniques.

"It's not a cure by any means, but rather an amazing support system," she says.

The program teaches a breathing technique used by opera singers called "costal breathing." It also incorporates psychological approaches known as "non-avoidance" and ways to counteract the freezing during speech or conversation.

"I still have days when I'm struggling with my speech, but now I know what I must do, and I have tools to make that change," she says. "To me that has been life changing."

continued on page 36 »

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

SPANISH FOR DENTISTS

Nearly one out of every five Ostrow patients speaks Spanish as their first language.

How can an Ostrow student, who might not *habla Español*, overcome the language barrier to provide quality dental treatment?

The [Hispanic Student Dental Association](#) (HSDA) has developed a series of language classes to help their non Spanish-speaking classmates do just that.

Every month, the HSDA holds Spanish lessons over lunch, teaching an average of 10 to 15 students (it can be as many as 40) words and phrases that will come in handy on the clinic floor. Lessons have centered around words related to anatomy, radiology, periodontology and finance. The instructors also include information about common Hispanic cultural beliefs to help their dental-school classmates develop the cultural competence to match their new language skills.

The students are then given Spanish-English cards to carry around with them to coach them through common interactions with Spanish-speaking patients, including how to make an appointment, explain what treatments they will be providing and even to make small talk to put a nervous patient at ease.

"I absolutely find value in attending the Spanish classes," Dryden Granger DDS '21 says. "I'm already using things I learn there in the clinic daily and on outreach trips."

Ostrow's HSDA aims to promote and advance oral health issues of underrepresented communities, especially within Southern California's Hispanic population. It currently has 121 members.

—JH

A DREAM COME TRUE

Mayall pursued a double major in biology and psychology at the [University of California-Davis](#) in 2008 and received a post-baccalaureate degree in 2012 from [San Francisco State University](#).

It was during her undergraduate years that Mayall and her sister, Ostrow graduate Isha Mayall DDS '17, discussed how rewarding it would be to pursue careers in dentistry and then to eventually practice together.

"Although, sometimes we disagree, we both have our own strengths, and we make a great team," the younger Mayall sister says.

Isha was accepted to Ostrow in the fall of 2013. Soon after, Roop applied and was accepted in the fall of 2014.

"It was a dream come true, not only to attend dental school with my sister, but to be accepted to a prestigious dental school such as USC," Roop says.

Although fortune had smiled on her, she was still dealing with her stutter on a day-to-day basis.

"It came as no surprise when I started dental school," she says. "I was juggling not only trying to understand the dental aspect but also being able to communicate with multiple people — from faculty to patients on a daily basis."

Mayall recalls, as a first-year dental student delivering a presentation on medical and dental differential diagnoses based on a case study, that her anxiety came rushing back.

"I had practiced all night with one of my best friends. Still, I remember walking into the room and getting this overwhelming feeling of anxiety," she says. "I managed to stay calm and, although I struggled, I worked up the courage to do my best."

"At some point, your circumstances will put you at a crossroads ... Don't let your limitations keep you tied down."

—Roop Mayall DDS '18

DON'T LET INSECURITY DEFINE YOU

As Mayall finishes her studies at Ostrow, she is already looking forward to the next chapter in her life. She plans to spend some quality time with her husband, Mandeep, and practice dentistry with her sister.

She also hopes to write a book about her experience trying to overcome speaking obstacles in the health and medical field.

"I would love to inspire others with any sort of insecurity that being a health care professional could be rewarding," she says. "At some point, your circumstances will put you at a crossroads between self-acceptance and self-doubt — just don't let your limitations keep you tied down."

Mayall adds that her time at USC, interacting with faculty members, her colleagues and most importantly patients, has really helped transform her.

"I have sincerely reached a level of comfort in my own skin. This doesn't mean I am perfect or cured; it just means that I have learned to respect myself and not let my insecurity define me."

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

PUBLIC SPEAKING

It's one of America's top fears — ahead of snakes, spiders and even clowns. But unlike most terrors, public speaking is often unavoidable, particularly in the professional world.

"Young graduates are looked to as experts and need to be able to present themselves as professional, approachable and confident to patients, colleagues, dental office staff and even larger groups at conferences," says Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry Christine Edwards PhD '91.

Funded by the Dental Transformation Initiative, the Dental Student Speakers Bureau was created to help students develop these necessary skills while also giving them an opportunity during their first two years to begin serving the local community through education and outreach.

"I believe the sooner we engage our students with the community, the better prepared they will be to treat patients during their final years," says Edwards, who serves as the group's faculty organizer. It's never too early to teach cultural awareness, patient communications skills or the importance of dental advocacy, she adds.

Before students step in front of an audience, they must undergo public speaking, HIPAA and CITI trainings. They are then immersed in oral health information modules and presentation materials covering many different dental topics.

Afterward, the speakers — there are currently 16 — are matched with speaking opportunities across the region, including educational sessions, parent-child workshops and career days, where they provide oral health instruction.

"I joined because it provided me the opportunity to share my passion for oral health with those who are eager to learn but often have few resources or opportunities to do so," MacKenzie Martin DDS '19 says.

But it's not just the audience that gets something out of this community outreach effort.

"Since becoming involved, I've become familiar with parents' most pressing dental concerns," Tae Kyun Ha DDS '20 says. "By listening to as many patients as I can as a student, I believe that I'll be better equipped to help patients as a professional." —JH

To join the Dental Student Speakers Bureau, contact Christine Edwards at deady@usc.edu.



A Chance to Smile Again

BY STEPHANIE CORRAL

Stephanie Saldana hid her smile for years. Born with amelogenesis imperfect, the teenager was told she would likely lose her teeth by age 15. Then Ostrow's pediatric dental clinic stepped in to save her smile.



year and a half ago, Stephanie Saldana's smile was a rare sight. Born with amelogenesis imperfecta, a rare tooth development disorder that causes teeth to be unusually small, grooved or discolored, Saldana would instinctively cover her mouth with her hand whenever she laughed to avoid being teased by her middle-school classmates.

But thanks to the work of two Ostrow students, the 14-year-old girl no longer has a reason to hide.

Which way to USC?

After being told by two dentists that her daughter would lose her teeth by the age of 15 unless she underwent a \$30,000 dental procedure, Elodia Saldana had no idea what to do.

"They scared me when they told me the price," says Elodia Saldana, who works at a Mexican restaurant in Gardena, Calif.

Determined to save her daughter's teeth, Elodia took Stephanie on a one-hour metro and bus ride to USC, after a friend suggested the dental school.

The two were directed to Ostrow's pediatric dentistry clinic, where USC dental students must complete a three-week rotation, as part of their education. They are also required to finish two one-week rotations at [QueensCare](#) — a mobile dental care program for low-income elementary school-age children — followed by a one-week rotation at a mobile clinic.

"When I saw the doctors, I felt an enormous sense of peace," Elodia Saldana says.

Elodia and Stephanie met with Gardner Beale DDS '76, an associate professor of clinical dentistry, and students Erik Ligans DDS '18 and Brandon Hernandez DDS '18.

"I was so scared and nervous," Elodia Saldana remembers. "I felt a lot of butterflies in my stomach, but then Dr. Beale said, 'No, we are going to save her teeth. She is

going to smile again, and we are going to work hard.' I was so happy."

An Amazing Learning Experience

Aware of the interest Ligans and Hernandez had in amelogenesis imperfecta after encountering the condition in a previous clinic patient, Beale and Julie Jenks, an assistant professor of clinical dentistry, offered them Saldana's case.

"I jumped on the opportunity as fast as I could because I knew it would be an amazing learning experience," Hernandez says.

For Ligans, the decision to take on Saldana's case was also rooted in genuine sympathy.

"Most people go to the dentist because they were neglectful of their teeth," Ligans says. "She was just dealt an unfair hand based on genetics."

Over the course of a year and a half, Ligans and Hernandez worked closely together on Saldana's case, under the supervision of Beale and Jenks.

Before any work could begin, Hernandez and Ligans had to create an economical plan to supplement Saldana's Denti-Cal coverage so that her mother would not have to pay out-of-pocket for the treatment.

Scheduling appointments that would suit everyone — including Beale and Jenks — was also challenging.

"We had to work around our own schedules, lectures, other patients, rotations and holidays," says Hernandez, in addition to limiting Saldana's appointments to once a week so she wouldn't fall behind in her schoolwork.

In the end, their teamwork approach made it all possible.

"We split the work 50/50 to make sure we gave our best to Stephanie," Hernandez says. "The days I couldn't make it, Erik stepped in to keep pushing ahead, and the days Erik couldn't make it, I'd step in to continue the work."

Saldana's treatment included making impressions of her teeth, mounting the casts and waxing every single tooth in her

mouth to give her composite crowns. But the most impactful part of her treatment was when she was given composite veneers.

"This was the point where she saw how this treatment could change her life," Hernandez says.

The two students also altered her vertical dimension of occlusion before removing all other defects in her teeth and filling them with composite.

"When we first saw her, she was really shy," Ligans says. "But as we were doing the treatment and fixing her teeth, she gradually became more outgoing."

The three became friends, often joking around, talking about school and discussing Saldana's interest in karate.

"She was the best patient," Ligans says, noting that she and her mother never missed an appointment. "She never complained."

A New Beginning

Now a freshman at [Narbonne High School](#) in Harbor City, Calif., Saldana has never been happier.

"I feel like a different person," Stephanie Saldana says. "I just thank them so much for giving me another chance to smile."

Elodia Saldana can't help but marvel at her daughter's transformation.

"She talks more, and her grades have gone up," Elodia Saldana says. "I think God heard my prayers. Those three doctors are like angels to me. We don't have much money, but I am so grateful."

After witnessing how dentistry changed her life, Saldana has decided she wants to become a dentist and a Trojan.

"I want to go to USC," says Saldana, who has enrolled in Advanced Placement classes. "I'm trying so hard to get As and Bs in my classes."

Even though Saldana's treatment has ended, Hernandez checks in with her periodically to see how she's doing in school and to watch for any dental issues that might arise.

"I want to know that the work we did will last. I take pride in my work and know that USC has taught us well," he says. "Getting feedback from Stephanie telling me she is



"I am so blessed to have been able to work on this case to remind me what type of dentist I want to be once I graduate from USC."

—Brandon Hernandez DDS '18

PHOTO BY [NATE JENSEN](#)

not in pain gives me a sense of accomplishment knowing we did a great job."

Saldana's case not only served as a confidence booster for Hernandez and Ligans to tackle rare cases, but it also

reminded them why they chose dentistry in the first place.

"Sometimes as students we get so caught up in requirements, graduation and school work that we don't stop to notice

there is a whole person attached to that mouth," Hernandez says. "I am so blessed to have been able to work on this case to remind me of what type of dentist I would like to be once I graduate from USC."



“Our profession is a journey of improving the human condition. Repairing teeth is our vehicle, and compassion is our roadway.”

PHOTO BY [NATE JENSEN](#)

The big thought that science is a world of endless discovery came to me at the age of 10. Captivated by the veins of a leaf I viewed through a microscope my parents gave me for Christmas, I found myself lost in a microcosm of detail that surpassed any other interest I had found. This was the genesis of my life’s journey.

Along with my profound childhood discovery, I had extraordinary parents. My mom has a servant heart and spends her life helping people maintain their well-being through health and nutrition.

My dad was an entrepreneur and mentor who helped others develop businesses to support their families. Together, they showed me that serving others creates a life of purpose, and giving brings meaning far beyond other pursuits. Consequently, I worked as a tutor for first-grade students, a “candy striper,” and a volunteer with both [Rotary International](#) and the [American Cancer Society](#).

With my love of science and passion to serve others, I eventually found dentistry as the avenue to fulfill both interests — and dental mission work as its ultimate expression. Working with [SmileOnU.org](#), a nonprofit organization that improves lives through dentistry, I help organize and support trips to developing countries. These trips affect everyone involved from the patients we heal to the volunteers who can experience moments of life-changing perspective.

One such moment for me was on our medical/dental mission in Cambodia where we cared for more than 3,000 adults and children. I came across a boy about 5 years old in a rice field near Phnom Penh as his family worked. He wore only a loin cloth and was covered from head to toe in mud. Just skin and bones, he stood crying with his hands extended to me. I took three steps forward and fell to my knees in tears.

In that moment, I saw every blessing of my life flash through my mind. I said to myself, “This is not right. I need to do more.” A newly arrived American in a developing country, I had received the fuel I needed to run the dental clinic where we would work for the next week.

At our clinic, I saw precious souls with few resources but enduring joy. We treated people in pain who just needed access to basic dentistry to relieve their suffering. With an exemplary USC education and more than 20 years of practicing dentistry at a high standard, I realized how easy it was to help with the basics on a grand scale. I experienced for myself the reward in serving others that my parents shared with me. I became hooked on giving at this level.

I had another rich experience on our recent dental mission to an orphanage in northern India. The 50 or so orphans there thrive under the devotion of a woman who left the United States to spend the past three decades giving them the best life possible. She and her staff provide for all their needs, which includes arranging for health care professionals like us to visit.

Expecting to find poverty, malnourishment and poor health, we found abundant love and care instead. After arriving as strangers, it felt like leaving family behind when it was time to say goodbye.

Each experience is unique and has its own jewel of what we give and receive in the small price of our sacrifice.

Our profession is a journey of improving the human condition. Repairing teeth is our vehicle, and compassion is our roadway. Who we become along our journey is the gift we give ourselves and to every other person within our reach.

*The following are gifts
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POST A JOB. FIND A JOB.



PHOTO BY LINDSEY NAM YIP DDS '16

**LOOKING FOR A JOB? LOOKING TO HIRE A TROJAN?
LOOKING FOR A TROJAN TO TAKE OVER YOUR PRACTICE?**

Career Connections is a comprehensive online job board where alumni and employers can connect.

Simply visit dentistry.usc.edu/careerconnections

Select the alumni or employer login. Register and create a profile. Begin posting or searching for jobs.

Questions? Call the Office of External Relations at (213) 740-0428.